

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5642

As of February 15, 2011

Title: An act relating to applied behavior analysis services.

Brief Description: Concerning applied behavior analyst services.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Pflug, Delvin, Roach, Regala, Pridemore and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/14/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Mich'l Needham (786-7442)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services, Aging and Disability Services Administration offers several programs and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Services may include case management, early childhood intervention, employment services, family counseling, family support, health services and equipment, legal services, residential services, respite care, therapy services, transportation, and vocational services.

Applied behavior analysis is a treatment for children with developmental disabilities or delays, including autism. It is the process of systematically applying behavioral interventions to improve academic skills, adaptive living skills, and social skills.

Summary of Bill: Applied behavior analysis services are added to the list of services that the department may provide to persons receiving services for developmental disabilities. The services may be provided by a state or nationally certified behavior analyst, a licensed mental health counselor, or a licensed psychologist.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There used to be access to the applied behavior analysis (ABA) providers but the change in law that transitioned registered counselors to licensed mental health counselors resulted in the loss of some providers that didn't want to get licensed as mental health counselors. We are trying to keep access to the services these children need. The national board certification for ABA providers requires extensive training. The ABA is the best treatment for autistic children, and we want to ensure there is an avenue for the developmentally disabled program to contract with these providers. Next year we can pursue a state license for ABA providers separate from the mental health counselors.

CON: The treatment of autism addresses a complex set of disturbances and the treatment should be provided by state regulated and licensed providers. There is not a state license today, and the providers are not regulated by the Uniform Disciplinary Act (UDA). The providers should have a complete understanding of the entire diagnostic manual and the range of treatment approaches. There is an alternative treatment for autistic children with reflective behavioral treatment that is half the cost, and is provided by licensed therapists. The ABA has a narrower focus and providers need exposure to broader protocols as well as the oversight of the UDA and continuing education requirements that other providers have.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Donna Patrick, Developmental Disabilities Council; Diana Stadden, The ARC of Washington.

CON: Laura Groshong, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work; Keith Myers, Wellspring Family Services; Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers.